DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 278 579 SO 017 497

AUTHOR Ediger, Marlow
TITLE What Is Amish in Old Amish Education.
PUB DATE 87
NOTE 13p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Amish; Cultural Background; *Cultural Isolation; Educational Experience; Elementary Education; Farmers; *Rural Farm Residents; Rural Youth; *Young - Farmer Education
IDENTIFIERS Amish (Older Order)

ABSTRACT

The Old Order Amish society is unique among diverse Mennonite sects. Their traditions and simplicity of lifestyle are evident in their manner of dress, non-mechanized farming practices, and rejection of electricity or running water in their homes. In an Old Order Amish education, children are taught the "four R's:" reading, writing, arithmetic, and religion, designed specifically for use within their culture. Responsibility for work is also an essential ingredient in Amish education since an Old Order Amish child has more work to do than a child on a modern farm. The lack of modern farming practices provides opportunities for many chores for the children. Old Order Amish education emphasizes caring for others and sharing one's goods and services. All age groups participate in barn raisings for other families and contribute to the farm and household work if an Amish member is ill or dies. Religious beliefs are the heart of Amish education. The entire social fabric is based on Biblical teaching. (APG)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED278579

WHAT IS AMISH IN OLD AMISH EDUCATION

by Marlow Ediger

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

✓ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Marlow Ediger

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

SO017457

Northeast Missouri State University
Kirksville, MO 63501
(816) 785-4391

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

WHAT IS AMISH IN OLD AMISH EDUCATION

Parochial, private, and public schools are in evidence in educating students. Each has its unique features and philosophies. Parochial education alone, has its diverse schools of thought. Diverse denominations support their own parochial schools. This paper will focus upon The Old Order Amish and parochial education.

BELIEFS OF THE OLD ORDER AMISH

The Old Order Amish are unique among diverse Mennonite sects. Traditions are emphasized as representing what is good. These traditions are defined in Old Order Amish culture. Thus, clothing worn identifies the Amish. Men and boys wear trousers with suspenders. The shirt worn as well as the trousers contain no stripes and no checks. Plain colors also appear on dresses for women and girls. Blue, green, purple, brown, and black are appropriate colors of womens and girls' dresses, as well as of mens' and boys' shirts. Trousers are generally blue in color. The womens' and girls' dresses have a very high neck line, long sleeve length reaching toward the wrist, and the length extending to the ankles. Old Order Amish women and girls wear prayer caps. Bonnets are worn in the out of doors.

Horse drawn farm machinery is used in farming rather than tractors and combines with air-conditioned cabs, power steering and power brakes, as well as hydraulic lifts. With horse drawn farm machinery, binders are used to cut grain into bundles. Threshing machines are utilized to seperate the grain from the straw and chaff contained in the bundles. Draft horses pull the gang plow in plowing the land. They also pull the disk to till

the fields as well as a grain drill to sow different crops.

There is no electricity used in Amish houses. Thus, no television, radio, or stereo sets are in the home setting. Electric ranges, dishwashers, and clothes washers are not in Amish homes. Water comes from wind power when windmills are utilized. With gravity flow the water moves from barrels of water filled by windmills to the houses for indoor running water. There are selected Amish congregations which do not permit running water in houses. Gravity flow water is used to water livestock.

Milking machines to milk cows may be powered by diesel fuel. It is forbidden to have commercial milk trucks pick up milk from Amish farms on Sunday. If an Amish farmer has cage laying hens he uses white gasoline to light carbuerators from Coleman lamps. The valve for the fuel is turned on at the time a bunsen burner is ignited to do the lighting. Seventeen hours of daylight is needed for laying hens to produce well.

Eggs, baked products, storm windows and screens,and fryers may be sold by Amish farmers to provide needed income together with livestock, grain, and milk produced. Self-sufficiency is emphasized by the Amish. Thus, they produce their own supply of meat from farm animals raised. Corn produced on the farm is fed to livestock. Large gardens are raised to provide food for the family, as well as to sell selected garden crop items to others.

To further emphasize self-sufficiency, clothes for the family are made by the housewife. Cloth is purchased and then made into dresses, trousers, and suits. Quilting is an important skill retained by Old Order Amish women. Amish quilts are known for their beauty and quality.

There are Amish men who work in factories and yet retain the identity of the church. Seemingly, Old Order Amish values can be maintained outside of a strictly rural farm setting. Thus, in Middleton, Ohio numerous Amish men work in factories, but the ultimate goal might be to become a farmer. Certain of these workers, however, prefer the regular income accrued from factory work. Even though factory work is performed, Amish people live in rural areas. If they live in cities, the size of the city is small indeed, such as six Old Order Amish couples living directly in Kalona, Iowa.

It is difficult to make statements about any culture which holds true always. Thus, in the Kalona, Iowa rural areas, tractors with steel wheels only, can be used in farming. But as Bishop Elmer T. Miller at Kalona,Iowa mentioned, even though he owns a John Deere 60 on steel wheels, he still prefers to farm using draft horses to pull implements.

Old Order Amish can also own and operate grocery stores. Near Kalona, Iowa in the rural area, a small grocery store is operated by the Amish. There are selected differences of an Old Order Amish grocery store as compared to a supermarket. Thus, no electrical appliances, light bulbs, or fuses are sold. The same brands of cereal, flour, and ice cream, are sold as eaten by others in society. Amish food items sold in the country store, among other differences, contain what full time housewives would emphasize in meal preparation such as chocolate and butterscotch chips, cocoanut, and red hots to put as decoration and flavor on homebaked cookies, cakes, and rolls.

There are numerous cookbooks developed from recipes written by Old Order Amish housewives. The following is an example of a unique recipe:

BUSHEL COOKIES

12 eggs
5 c lard
5 lb sugar
1 qt milk
6 tbsp soda
6 tbsp baking soda
1 c maple flavored Karo (green label)
2 lb raisins & 1 lb salted peanuts, ground together
2 lbs quick oats
6 lbs flour (about 18 c)

Mix in order given and drop by spoonfuls on greased and floured cookie sheets. Bake in 375 to 400 oven till browned. This is a chewy cookie, very good for Holiday season baking, makes almost a bushel cookies, enough to eat your fill, and give away too.[1]

AMISH EDUCATION

Old Order Amish parochial schools emphasize numerous unique goals in the curriculum. A school for the four r's is in evidence.

Reading, the first of the four r's, stresses word recognition and comprehension skills using basal readers published by a religious publishing house. Biblical subject matter is contained in these readers. Stories of Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and David, among others, are then in the offing. Students learn to use phonics, syllabication, context clues, and sight word methods to identify new unknown words. Comprehension skills, such as reading for facts, directions, and sequence of ideas, are stressed.

The other language arts areas, such as writing of ideas, spelling, handwriting, and punctuation are stressed in the curriculum. Writing, the second of the four r's, is a basic in the Old Order Amish school curriculum. In his office, the writer has pictures of Biblical content drawn by Amish pupils. With each illustration

---

[1]Mrs. Chris Miller. Country Cooking. Amish of Buchanan County Iowa: Edgewood Press, 1978, page 14

drawn, there is related written content. For example a city set on a hill has been drawn and ideas underneath the illustration that state: Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid (Matthew 5:14).

Old Order Amish pupils also learn to write business and friendly letters, paragraphs, stories, and announcements.

Arithmetic (the third of the four r's) is taught by an Old Order Amish teacher using a basal textbook. The textbook is from a leading publishing company and is secular in nature. As is true of reading and writing, pupils come to a recitation table to recite lesson studied. The teacher generally starts a class by reading the answers to pupil's completed work in arithmetic. Students exchange papers to check each other's work as the correct answers are read by the teacher. The number of answers each student misses is then recorded by the teacher. Next, the teacher explains and tells how to work the new problems or computations of the next lesson.

The fourth r (religion) is essential to Old Order Amish culture. Generally, the Bible is studied in the German language. German is the language of preaching services conducted every other Sunday in Old Order Amish homes. Amish children are expected to know much Bible. Religious verses appear on paper at different places in the classroom, such as "God is not mocked; whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap."

Old Order Amish pupils in the classroom are expected to behave. The teacher may write lesson assignments on the chalkboard for four or five minutes with the back turned to pupils. The latter may continue their lessons diligently regardless if

the teacher is observing student behavior or not.

Amish parents tend to back the teacher in emphasizing diligence, hard work, and responsibility. Old Order Amish pupils reveal their participation in farm work at an early age. Before attending school or after school, an Amish child helps to milk cows, gather eggs, take mash (feed) to the laying hens, carry feed to the sows and pigs, as well as do garden work.

An Old Order Amish child has much more work to do than one on a modern farm. Minimized mechanization on Amish farms provides opportunities for children to feed and water farm animals. Thus, grain is carried in a bucket to feed laying hens or, buckets of water are taken to the hen houses. Whereas, on a modern farm, six to eight laying hens are in a metal cage. There may be 10,000 to 16,000 laying hens in cages arranged in rows. Mash is brought to the farm by a feed company. The mash is augurred from the truck to a bin which hold the feed. From the bin, the augur powered by an electric motor automatically, gets the mash to laying hens. The mash then moves along the long rows of cage layers. Water for laying hens is also automated in that electric pumps pump water to keep the shallow troughs filled.

On Old Order Amish farms, each farm ranging from eighty to one hundred twenty acres, school age pupils have responsibilities in doing chores and farm work in general. It is very difficult to have purposeful work for students before and after school if modern farm machines and equipment are utilized.

Responsibility for work is an essential ingredient of Amish education. Work is good and essential in that "in the sweat of thy brow shalt thou eat bread." God intended that human beings

should work and not be idle. "Six days shalt thou labor and do all thy work. But the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God; in it thou shalt not do any work."

Old Order Amish education also emphasizes that "we are our brother's keeper." Caring for others and sharing one's goods and services is essential. The individual is not an island unto itself. As adults, Amish engage in barn raising for Amish and non-Amish whose buildings were destroyed due to fire and natural disasters. If an Amish member is ill or has died, other members of the faith will pitch in to do the farm or housework.

Religious beliefs, in many ways, are the heart of Amish education in that "the wisdom of this world is foolishness in God's sight." Whatever is done in Amish society is based on Biblical teaching. Religious services are held in homes and not in church buildings due to "God does not dwell in a building built by human hands."

Amish believe they are pilgrims on this earth and are then stewards of land owned and or farmed. In being stewards of God, preventing land erosion is important. Using animal fertilizer as well as commercially purchased fertilizer in selected communities, keeps soil rich and productive. Some of the best farm land in the United States is farmed by the Old Order Amish. Amish communities, such as Bloomfield, Kalona, and Oelwein, Iowa as well as Goshen, Indiana, Holmes County, Ohio, and Lancaster County, Pennsylvania have productive farm communities. Farm land is not to be exploited but rather conserved and improved upon. Old Order Amish do have a reputation in being excellent farmers. Horse drawn farm machinery and its uses does not hinder

grain production on Amish farms. The stewardship concept and philosophy helps Old Order Amish to maintain and improve the quality of farm land, as well as produce grain to sell and to feed livestock. Home produced food is important in raising large families which is an Amish ideal.

The ideal sized Amish family has eight to twelve children. A further ideal is to keep all offspring in the Old Order Amish fold. Old Order Amish, with few exceptions, do not believe in birth control methods. With the joys and privileges of marriage a large family is an end result. "Be fruitful and replenish the earth" is important Amish philosophy. "Train up a child in the way he should go and when he is old, he will not depart from that way."

The methods used to raise and train children must harmonize with Old Order Amish beliefs and values. "Thou shalt not make unto thee any engraven image or likeness of any thing that is in heaven above or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth." No slides or snapshots are to be taken of the Old Order Amish. Models of real items are not to be made. However, models of tractors, animals, and wagons may be purchased or made as toys for children. Amish children learn from the real world when engaging in farm work. The abstract is learned in reading, writing, spelling, oral communication, and arithmetic. The abstract, however, becomes useful as reading, writing, arithmetic, and religion are utilized in society. Developing theories is not advocated. Rather Amish life requires action. Amish farming methods require a doing approach. One learns to farm by participating and doing. Amish learn to build

buildings through actual involvement in these processes and prodedures. Theorizing is not necessary, according to Amish beliefs.

Work is perceived as being good, necessary, and noble. White collar or managerial positions are not desired or wanted. Rather farming and interaction with nature become relevant goals. Also, upward social mobility is definitely not emphasized. Farming together with a large closely knit family is emphasized. Land holdings from one Amish family to the next does not vary much. Eighty to one hundred twenty acres per Amish family is the general size of farms. Horse drawn farm equipment emphasizes small farm size in terms of acres farmed.

There is a hierarchy of levels within Old Order Amish society. At the apex is the bishop. Next in importance are the two ministers, followed by the deacon. When being baptized and taking the vow for the church membership, generally at age sixteen, each Old Order Amish male accepts the responsibility of becoming a bishop, a minister, or a deacon, if chosen by lot at an older age. A Biblical Commonwealth within the United States is inherent in Old Order Amish beliefs. The Biblical Commonwealth is based on teachings of the Bible, as interpreted by Old Order Amish. The vow taken at age sixteen is assumed to be of utmost importance.

"An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth" is in opposition to Old Order Amish thinking. Rather one should "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you..."

Working out harmoniously disagreements with others is important.

Within Amish society, the deacon has a major responsibility to assist members to work out their disagreements. Old Order Amish are pacifists not only in terms of all wars, but also in dealing with the other society.

In Summary

Old Order Amish culture is unique in American society. The Amish are a practical people. What is learned in school needs to be useful in Amish culture. In working on Amish farms, the real world of the concrete is emphasized. Book farming is not advocated. Abstract learnings in the 4 r's acquired in school are to be used in their cultrue. Thus, abstractions are utilized in the real world of Amish society.

Selected Reference

Miller, Mrs. Chris Country Cooking. Amish of Buchanan County Iowa: Edgewood Press, 1978